

Introduction

Three stories

On a warm June day in 2005, Steve Jobs went to his first college graduation – as the commencement speaker. The billionaire founder and leader of Apple Computer wasn't just another stuffed-shirt businessman. Though only fifty years old, the college dropout was a technology rock star, a living legend to millions of people around the world.

In his early twenties, Jobs almost single-handedly introduced the world to the first computer that could sit on your desk and actually do something all by itself. He revolutionized music and the ears of a generation with a spiffy little music player called the iPod and a wide selection of songs at the iTunes store. He funded and nurtured a company called Pixar that made the most amazing computer-animated movies – *Toy Story*, *Cars*, and *Finding Nemo* – bringing to life imaginary characters like never before.

Though he was neither an engineer nor a computer geek, he helped create one gotta-have-it product after another by

always designing it with you and me, the actual users, in mind. Unknown to those listening to him that day, more insanely awesome technology was in the works, including the iPhone, which would put much of the power of a computer neatly into the palm of your hand. The father of four would be repeatedly compared with the inventor Thomas Edison and auto magnate Henry Ford, who both introduced affordable, life-changing conveniences that transformed the way Americans lived.

Yet for all his successes, Jobs also endured some very public failures. When he was thirty years old, he was summarily stripped of his duties at Apple for being too disruptive and difficult. He set out to build another computer company and missed the mark, blowing through millions of dollars of investors' money. He could be volatile, screaming at associates, competitors, and reporters. He sometimes cried when things didn't go his way and he regularly took credit for the ideas of others. He could be both charming and gratingly abrasive, sensitive and stunningly mean-spirited.

Some parts of his life sounded like a fairy tale right out of the movies: there was a promise made when he was a baby, romances, remarkable rebounds, and riches almost too big to be believed. Other parts were so messy and ugly, so very human, that they would never be considered family entertainment. He was both loved and hated, intensely admired and

widely dismissed. People described him with the strongest words: visionary. Showman. Artist. Tyrant. Genius. Jerk.

Wearing blue jeans and sandals under his graduation-day robe, Jobs stepped up to the microphone to speak in the same way he did just about everything: with intensity and passion. In a short speech to the twenty-three thousand students, parents, and friends gathered, he very publicly shared very personal insights into his own life.

“Today I want to tell you three stories from my life,” he said.

No more. Just three stories that defined an amazing life and provided a guide designed for people at the beginning of their adult lives. To understand who Steve Jobs was and what he became, it helps to start there, with the first of those three stories.